

**MOJAVE-SOUTHERN GREAT BASIN  
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 23, 2000  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA**

Field trip to U.S. Forest Service (FS) Spring Mountains National Recreation Area, led by Tom Kuekes, District Ranger.

Resource Advisory Council (**RAC**) members present and category represented:

Robert Maichle	Recreation
Maurice Frank-Churchill	Native American
Barbara Callihan	Dispersed Recreation
Marta Agee	Ranching
Susan Selby	Environment
Duane Whiting	Mining
Jerry Helton	Transportation and ROW
John Hiatt	Wildlife
Colleen Beck	Archaeology
Alan Levinson	Permitted Recreation
Mike Wickersham	Elected Official

Bureau of Land Management (**BLM**) representatives present:

Mark Morse	Las Vegas Field Manager
Mike Dwyer	Project Manager, Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Project Office
Jo Simpson	Chief, Communications
Phillip Guerrero	Las Vegas Public Affairs Officer

Public Attendees:

Keith Rodgers	Reporter, <i>Las Vegas Review-Journal</i>
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*A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the Las Vegas Field Office of the BLM. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Phillip Guerrero, (702) 647-5046.*

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The purpose of the trip was to look at private property within the Spring Mountains (National Rerecation Area) NRA that is proposed for acquisition with Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA) funds. The funds are generated by the sale of public land in the Las Vegas Valley, which can be used for acquisition of environmentally sensitive property within Nevada.

Tom Kuekes, U.S. Forest Service District Ranger, briefed RAC members on the importance to the FS of acquiring the private inholdings. Kuekes also briefed the group on the plans the FS has for improved visitor facilities.

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John Hiatt	Wildlife
Colleen Beck	Archaeology
Alan Levinson	Permitted Recreation
Mike Wickersham	State Agency
Steve Mellington	Public-At-Large
(joined group in afternoon)	

Resource Advisory Council members absent :

Gary Hollis	Elected Official
Stanley Smith	Academic

Bureau of Land Management (**BLM**) representatives present:

Bob Abbey	Nevada State Director
Mark Morse	Las Vegas Field Manager
Mike Dwyer	Manager, So. Nevada Public Land Management Act Project Office
Eric Luse	Associate Field Manager, Ely Field Office
Craig MacKinnon	Field Station Manager, Tonopah Field Station
Angie Lara	Associate Field Manager, Las Vegas Field Office
Mike Gates	Tonopah Public Affairs Specialist
Jo Simpson	Chief, Communications, BLM Nevada
Phillip Guerrero	Public Affairs Officer, Las Vegas Field Office
Debra Kolkman	Office of Communications, Nevada State Office

Public Attendees:

Susan Snyder	Reporter, Las Vegas <i>Sun</i>
Tom Kuekes	District Ranger, U.S. Forest Service

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Chairman Whiting called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m. in the conference room at the Las Vegas Field Office.

Council member John Hiatt lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Chairman Whiting welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked everyone to be sure to sign in. He also recognized State Director Bob Abbey and asked him to address the group.

## **JANUARY 21, 2000 RAC MINUTES**

Before the first agenda item was discussed, Dr. Colleen Beck, RAC member, asked if the minutes from the January 21 meeting had been finalized, or if they were going to approve the minutes today.

Phil Guerrero, Public Affairs Officer and RAC Coordinator, Las Vegas Field Office, stated that he had not incorporated all changes made by the RAC members when they reviewed the draft minutes at the last meeting. The revised minutes from the January 21 RAC meeting will be sent to all RAC members for review before the next meeting. Guerrero suggested that if the minutes could be reviewed in advance of the RAC meetings, then the RAC could approve the minutes, the Chairman could sign, and the members could proceed with more important business.

## **UPDATE FROM STATE DIRECTOR BOB ABBEY**

State Director Abbey told RAC members he had met with airport officials on the proposed Ivanpah cargo airport, which would relieve the pressure on McCarran Airport. Clark County supports the Ivanpah site. The Clinton Administration has testified against the site, citing concerns about noise and light pollution in the nearby Mojave National Preserve. BLM is concerned about loss of recreation use in the area. BLM and the National Park Service (NPS) are willing to work with airport officials.

According to the bill introduced in Congress, BLM would convey the property, after which the Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the Department of the Interior (DOI) would prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to determine if the site was suitable for an airport. If the outcome of the EIS was that the site was unsuitable, the land would revert back to BLM management. The lands conveyed to the county for development around the airport would be sold at fair market value, with the proceeds going into the special account established under the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA).

If the airport is built, growth will occur in the Jean and Primm areas. BLM and Clark County should jointly plan for the I-15 corridor between Las Vegas west and the state line before BLM will entertain an exchange or sale of the public lands identified for disposal in those areas which would involve nearly 6,500 acres. Due to the potentially high impacts in the area for support services, State Director Abbey would like the RAC involved.

## **SOUTHERN NEVADA PUBLIC LAND MANAGEMENT ACT (ACQUISITION PRIORITIES)**

Mike Dwyer, Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act Project Manager, handed out a draft press release which listed properties nominated for acquisition by three Federal agencies (U. S. Forest

Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the BLM) using revenue generated by the sale of public land in the Las Vegas Valley under the SNPLMA. He also handed out the SNPLMA charter for evaluating the proposed acquisitions.

Both documents were provided to the public for comment. Twenty letters have been received so far on the evaluation process, including a letter from this RAC. Comments received so far indicated the public would like to see the process more open and have more opportunity for public involvement. Comments received included a recommendation that an advisory committee be established to provide recommendations on acquisitions. BLM believes that the RACs can provide this function.

Dwyer clarified that the Secretary of the Interior decides how the monies will be used, and that he has not delegated that responsibility. After the 30-day comment period ends April 20, State Director Abbey and the regional chiefs of the Forest Service, Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service will review the comments and provide recommendations to the Secretary for approval. The Secretary has the final say, and may add others to the list. ***Comments will be made available to the RAC in the May meeting.*** Sites have not yet been ranked.

Dwyer said that two sales of land under the SNPLMA will be conducted every year. The first sale was in November and the next sale is in June.

The RAC discussed purchase of lands in southern Nevada (Las Vegas) versus northern Nevada. The point was made that although the northern Nevada parcels on the current proposed acquisition list include more acres, the values are greater for the southern parcels. The 29-acre Lady of the Snows parcel in the Spring Mountains Natural Resource Area (NRA) has the same value as 10,000 acres in Humboldt County.

Dwyer indicated that the Act states that preference is to be given to Clark County, and the scoring process for proposed acquisitions provides additional points for Clark County lands.

Chairman Whiting asked if the SNPLMA was going to require EIS related studies. Dwyer answered that proposed acquisitions must be consistent with existing land use plans. Some of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) work is already done, but the agencies need to update the plans to be in compliance with NEPA. Some of the incurred costs can be recovered from the SNPLMA account such as appraisals, surveys, and cultural surveys.

Council member Susan Selby asked why no nominations were given from BLM on Clark County lands? Las Vegas Field Manager Mark Morse responded that the most critical area for BLM is Red Rock Canyon NCA, but he wanted to complete the management plan currently in progress before nominating private inholdings for acquisition.

After some discussion on options for land exchanges and keeping identified lands available, State Director Abbey indicated that a third party, such as The Conservation Fund, could purchase and hold land for us until the land could be purchased through the SNPLMA process.

State Director Abbey indicated that lands being offered for sale under the SNPLMA are lower-valued scattered parcels that are management problems for the local field office. Subsequent sales will offer the higher-valued parcels.

#### **DISCUSSION OF MT. CHARLESTON/SPRING MOUNTAINS NRA TOUR**

Chairman Whiting thanked Kuekes for the Mt. Charleston tour on the previous afternoon and for being present today to answer any questions.

#### **DISCUSSION ON ELY LAND DISPOSAL ISSUE**

Eric Luse, Associate Field Manager Ely Field Office, gave a presentation on land disposals in the Ely district. In Lincoln County there have been 3,700 acres; mostly from desert land entries and FLPMA sales. There has been a dramatic increase in requests to purchase public land in the last few years. The list he handed out includes properties in Lincoln and White Pine counties that have been disposed of over the last five years.

Luse stated that the Lincoln/Douglas exchange is still being worked on. Page 3 of his handout includes a series of projects the BLM lands staff are working on. The question was asked about how the proposed disposals are prioritized for processing. Luse explained that the Tri-County group comprising White Pine, Lincoln and Nye county commissioners prioritize a list from all three counties.

The Lincoln/Douglas Exchange as originally proposed cannot proceed because of the Desert Tortoise protest, filed by county officials and residents in Lincoln County. Lands within the protest area are deadlocked until the protest is resolved. BLM has offered additional lands not included in the area covered by the proposed plan amendment, which include some lands in White Pine County.

Council member Mike Wickersham inquired as whether the offered lands were fee title lands as well as conservation easements? State Director Abbey answered that the Douglas County offered lands were conservation easements.

Luse explained progress on the Coyote Springs Exchange. BLM submitted a draft proposal. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would like to acquire Muddy River lands. In exchange, Coyote Springs would acquire land from the Coyote Springs Aero-Jet BLM-leased lands. Luse described other actions going on within the Ely district, including 12 acres for Jim Christianson to develop a resort near Ash Springs. An endangered pup fish resides in the spring area. There are also cultural concerns adjacent to the site. He also mentioned a fiber optics cable project from Salt Lake City to Las Vegas along the railroad line.

## **TONOPAH LAND DISPOSAL ISSUE**

Craig MacKinnon, Tonopah Field Station Manager, presented land issues for the Tonopah area. The Lockes Pond property in Railroad Valley, located in Nye County, is comprised of 460 acres. This nomination area contains critical habitat for the Railroad Valley springfish. It is owned by Mr. Rory Hall who is a willing seller.

A problem has surfaced with the proposal to purchase lands in the Lockes Pond area with SNPLMA funds. The Good Hearts Dairy wants to buy the land to exchange for other lands in the area. Mark Morse, Las Vegas Field Manager, has responded that the lands identified by the dairy are not identified for disposal in the current land use plan. Nye County Commissioner Dick Carver from Nye County has expressed concern about there being a no-net gain in Federal lands.

Council member Marta Agee inquired as to whether the SNPLMA funds could be available to build new irrigation systems? State Director Abbey explained that SNPLMA funds cannot be used for this purpose.

State Director Abbey stressed that consultation with the Tribes is critical as lands are identified for purchase or disposal.

## **RAC NOMINATIONS**

Jo Simpson, Chief, Communications, Nevada State Office stated BLM is accepting RAC nominations through April 20. She told the members that we would hate to see any one leave the RAC, but there is a big push from the Secretary of the Interior to have turnover. Five positions expire this year. If members are interested, they should reapply, but to be aware of the pressure from Washington to have new faces on the RACs. She also stated that the Mojave-Southern RAC needed a wild horse and burro representative, and that the recreation position expiring this year is being converted to meet that need.

At 10:15 a.m., Chairman Whiting temporarily recessed the meeting for a break. The meeting was reconvened at 10:43 a.m.

## **UPDATE ON CULTURAL RESOURCES**

Dr. Beck, lead for the cultural sub-group reported the sub-group had planned a trip to Arrow Canyon petroglyph panels, but were unable to go. The tour was rescheduled for March 31. Stan Rolf will accompany them. After this tour, they will go to Gold Butte.

Robert Maichle council member, explained to everyone that Arrow Canyon is the narrow part of the canyon, and when water flows, it may wash away sediment to show more petroglyphs. Rock art in the canyon is vast and impressive. Southern Paiute bands are having disagreement over the canyon. There are serious threats to this site from ATVs, which could lead to a loss of the art.

The group discussed how sites such as Sloan and Gold Butte were not well known sites, but that could change overnight. Once sites become well known, they also are at great risk of being vandalized due to increased visitation.

Maichle discussed with RAC members how a group at an environmental summit discussed Gold Butte as a national monument to increase protection.

Maurice Frank-Churchill, council member, commented that he believes the Paiutes should be included in all discussions from the very beginning; Maichle concurred. Frank-Churchill questioned whether Stan Rolf had contacted the tribe. The Las Vegas office will follow up on that question before the tour, especially since some of this land is considered holy to the tribe. It was suggested that the land be blessed before the RAC goes on the tour, and that Native Americans should have final say in how to protect these and other areas since they are all subject to public vandalism.

Dr. Beck commented on an article she had read about Senator Reid conducting a meeting with environmental groups, of which one discussion was about the Sloan Petroglyph. As she understands, Senator Reid really wants to do something with Sloan, as he is concerned about development by Del Webb Corporation. BLM has contracted with the Harry Reid Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, for a study of how to manage Sloan Canyon. The funding for the study was made available in the fiscal year 1999 budget.

**The RAC sub-group would also like to expand the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) around Sloan to help protect the area.** Chairman Whiting encouraged all RAC members to give their full support to the sub-group.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Frank-Churchill asked to speak as a member of the public to bring forth some issues concerning his tribe, the Yomba (handout is attached to original minutes in the Las Vegas Field Office).

Frank-Churchill informed everyone present that as of February, the BLM quit accepting payment for grazing fees, as it had cancelled their temporary grazing permit. They had been paying their permitting fees since 1991, and have worked with BLM on herd management. He drew the RAC members' attention to letters in the handout which indicates correspondence between the tribe and the BLM. Frank-Churchill stressed that there needs to be a solution to this grazing/fee problem.

Grazing is the livelihood of the Yomba tribe. Frank-Churchill believes BLM has authority from the President to settle these matters. It is Frank-Churchill's hope that the RAC will give BLM direction to help fix this situation so all parties are satisfied. The tribe doesn't want to go into legal battle. BLM has similar issues with Mary and Carrie Dann. Frank-Churchill shared this information with the RAC, with the hope that the RAC can give both parties direction. (See the following comments from RAC members and the BLM regarding this issue including those in summary from the Chairman.)

State Director Abbey asked the RAC if he could respond. BLM notified the tribe last summer that there would be no temporary grazing until the trespass issue is resolved. The past due fees total more than \$1 million. BLM has been meeting with the tribe to try to get a serious settlement offer from the tribe that BLM can take to the Department of Justice.

State Director Abbey stated he does not have authority to forgive \$1 million in past due fees and penalties. The BLM has yet to receive any offer from the tribe (except for a \$100 check written in the early '90s). He still would like to work with tribe to resolve issues. Similar offers have also been made to Mary and Carrie Dann and the Temoak tribe in Elko County--bring us an offer so we can go forward.

State Director Abbey added that there were many things BLM could do to benefit the tribe, and he hopes to resolve this issue soon. He stressed that he will not authorize grazing on that allotment while the tribe is in trespass. If cattle are grazing on the allotment, then BLM will issue a trespass and removal notice.

Frank-Churchill stated that the cattle will stay out on the lease, and come fall, cattle will be out there again. The tribe believes they are not in trespass, because the lands belong to the Tribe according to the Ruby Valley Treaty (see map from handout).

MacKinnon informed the RAC that several permittees have had their leases canceled because of failure to pay their grazing fees.

The RAC would like to see this problem resolved. Members would like to see good-faith negotiations from each party. The group discussed that the tribe was in trespass from 1983 to 1991. The tribe has been paying its temporary grazing permit since 1991. Dirk Agee had made an offer of \$5,000 to the tribe to help with the trespass fee. Where is that?

Frank-Churchill responded that the tribe wants to use the money among other tribes so they can stand united. But Agee was concerned as the original offer was to settle the past trespass issue. She is concerned now that this will become a current issue instead of a past issue. The window of opportunity is fast closing, and Mr. Agee's offer cannot stay on the table forever.

State Director Abbey once again stressed to the members that BLM has received no offer. BLM stated their position last year, and had hoped for a good faith offer from the Tribe.

Frank-Churchill believes BLM should have sent a monthly bill, and that the statute of limitations has expired. BLM never sent a monthly bill, and they never had an accurate count of cattle at the time of the trespass.

Council member Levinson asked the question that if Mr. Agee put forth the \$5,000 to pay the trespass, would the tribe be amenable to it? Since Frank-Churchill cannot speak for other tribes, Alan Levinson encouraged Frank-Churchill to go to the other tribes to see if they would accept the offer.



The question was asked whether a third party can pay the trespass on behalf of the tribe? State Director Abbey commented that the tribe has to take the offer to the Department of Justice, and it must be from the tribe. Plus BLM and the tribe would still have to talk about present and future grazing leases. All tribes would have to be acceptable to abiding to the grazing regulations. It was suggested the Dann sisters would not abide by the grazing regulations. When asked if BLM would accept Mr. Agee's check and have an attorney draw up the necessary papers, State Director Abbey stated the Yomba would have to be the signatory on the agreement. BLM would really like to go forward to the Department of Justice with an offer to say let's put this behind us.

Frank-Churchill would like to see these fees go towards range improvements on tribal land. State Director Abbey commented that if an agreement were reached, the portion of the fees that come back to BLM Nevada could be returned to the Tribe for allotment improvements, but that all of the fees collected did not stay with BLM.

MacKinnon alerted the RAC that the trespass notice went out today (March 24) and a decision will be issued that rejects the grazing permit until the trespass problem has been solved. BLM is coming to a point where they will have to permanently cancel the tribe's grazing rights. BLM has no issues with the tribe's current grazing management.

Frank-Churchill asked MacKinnon if BLM would increase permit numbers? MacKinnon answered that he was not sure of the numbers right now. Frank-Churchill stated that part of the tribes grazing plan was to increase the number of cows on the allotment.

Agee told Frank-Churchill that BLM treats its permittees all the same. The treatment is not just specific to the Yomba. Tribal members need to meet with cattle owners who graze on Federal lands for advice regarding issues that are common to all grazing permittees.

Council member Hiatt believes that a professional mediator needs to intercede. A mediator would help resolve issues. He hasn't heard anything to believe that the Dann's would sign any type of an agreement with BLM. He urged the Yomba to try to resolve the trespass issue without the Dann tie. State Director Abbey interjected that BLM could ask the Department of Justice to offer a mediator for the tribe.

At this time Chairman Whiting stated that the RAC needed to table this discussion as there was nothing that could be done right now. He wanted to leave the discussion with these ideas: 1) The Yomba need to make an offer to BLM. They need to utilize Mr. Agee's offer. It needs to be an offer from the Yomba-not an all inclusive Western Shoshone offer; 2) BLM needs to work on a way for the Yomba to continue to graze on BLM lands; 3) both parties need to resolve the issues at hand; and 4) an independent mediator-not affiliated with BLM or the tribe-needs to be brought in to try to get a resolution.

**Chairman Whiting would like to have an update at the next meeting from both parties. (For the record, this issue was not discussed as an agenda item at the next RAC meeting held in Beatty. But, if it is the consensus of the RAC, and within our purview, official recommendations will be made to the BLM and Tribe.)**

Chairman Whiting asked if there was any other public comment.

Maichle added that although the discussion had been critical of the Danns, they do own private property that has been taken good care of.

At 12:14 p.m., Chairman Whiting temporarily recessed the meeting for lunch. The meeting was reconvened at 1:02 p.m.

## **DISCUSSION/ACTION ON NOXIOUS WEEDS STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

Chairman Whiting acknowledged that noxious weeds are a major problem. The RAC had asked Guerrero to have someone come to today's meeting to give a briefing to the RAC. After some discussion, **the RAC decided guidelines for weed control could be incorporated into the existing standard and guidelines for vegetation developed without too much revision.**

Shane Deforest, Ely Field Office, discussed noxious weeds on the national level and compared that strategy to Nevada's strategy, Ely Field Office strategy, and the strategy of the other field offices in the state. (See handout 1-Weed Management. The strategy for Nevada is a version of the 1997 National strategy.)

***Handout*** -Weed Management. Strategy for Nevada is a version of the National strategy (1997).

DeForest explained that noxious weeds are spreading at a rate of 2,300 acres per day in Nevada; 4,600 acres per day for all western lands. On BLM lands, 5% have been affected by weeds as of 1997. By the year 2000, over 19% of BLM lands will be affected.

The current estimate in Nevada is that from 20 to 26 million acres are affected by noxious and invasive species. Another 70 million acres are susceptible. In determining susceptibility for weed invasion around the State, BLM used certain criteria, such as an 8 to 12 inch precipitation rate. Mid-seral and late-seral conditions occurred, but not necessarily only in disturbed areas.

Majority of weeds known to occur in Nevada are spotted knapweed and Russian knapweed.

Spotted knapweed is the most common in the Ely District, and exists along highway rights-of-way. The knapweed is also moving into some previously burned rangelands near Pioche. Seed from some of these noxious weeds can last between 15-20 years in the soil (see brochures). Agee asked why we couldn't easily get rid of rights-of-way weeds just off the highway? DeForest explained that rights-of-way maintenance and procedures encourage weeds, and even if we could get them now when they are most vulnerable or when they aren't established, highway practices

ensure they will return, but this certainly would be the best method.

Next DeForest talked about the Dalmatian Toad Flax. It is spread by underground runners, like sod grass. The flax can live 7 to 8 years in the soil. It develops a waxy coating on its leaves and the flowers resemble a snapdragon. Toadflax is very common in the eastern part of the state around Pioche, and is spreading. It was found in White Pine County last summer.

Tall white top is in Lincoln County in the White River Valley, and has had a dramatic effect on the area. It is a very competitive perennial with deep roots and a waxy cover on its leaves. The seed floats on water, and therefore; spreads quickly. White top can grow from plant parts as small as 1/8". Truckee River is an excellent example of the effect white top has on vegetation and agriculture.

Agee added that the area DeForest was talking about used to be beautiful fields. Since the white top invaded, it has spread 35 to 40 miles. DeForest indicated the State Legislature has allocated funds for the State to help work on the weed problem.

Chairman Whiting asked DeForest if the State didn't have a program for control last year along the Truckee River?

DeForest stated that white top has been found on only four sites within the Ely district. All but one site is under one acre. Clover Creek is under one acre.

Agee asked DeForest if there were any regulations which prohibit weed seeds in bird seed? DeForest said no regulations exist that prohibit weeds in bird seed. A big hole exists in those type of regulations.

Luse, Associate Field Manager, Ely Field Office, told the RAC that in South Dakota a K-mart store was actually selling leafy spurge in bird seed a few years ago.

DeForest stated that leafy spurge has been found in two locations; one in Ely; and one in Nye County. This will be the second year to check the status of these locations to see if the weed is spreading. In the northern United States and the Midwest, leafy spurge has proliferated. Leafy spurge roots can be as deep as 30 feet. Plants bud from as deep as 6 to 8 feet, and chemical control penetrates only 6 to 10 inches.

Russian knapweed is very common in the eastern and northwestern Nevada, especially around Pioche. These weeds produce a chemical that deposits on the soil surface preventing competition. These seeds

can last up to five years in the soil. Russian knapweed has a deep root system that spreads rapidly by runners.

Salt Cedar is the most common noxious weed occurring in the southern RAC area. It was originally introduced to help soil erosion in the 1930s when the dustbowls were occurring. The plant accumulates salt in the leaves which drops on the ground preventing other native plants from growing. Burning (which used to be practiced) only encourages regrowth. Once weeds are eradicated, rehabilitation is required. All noxious weeds are difficult to control.

The best strategy to control weeds is to provide the public with information about plant identification. There has been a concerted effort to detect plants in the Ely District. Small patches of weed are extremely hard to see because the patches are only the size of a shovel. Last year, BLM inventoried about 270,000 acres mostly along paved roads. Now BLM has the remote areas to go through and inventory.

Detection is the second priority for weed control. Once a weed is established, eradication doesn't work well as you are in the mode of containing it so it doesn't spread further. DeForest stressed to the RAC that you have to seriously consider site rehabilitation once control is achieved. Plants must be introduced that will out compete the weed.

The Ely Field Office is concentrating on inventorying public lands. The Tri-County (Nye, Lincoln and White Pine counties) have passed ordinances to become Weed Districts. Lincoln and White Pine counties are working on the ordinance; Nye County is already a weed district. DeForest stressed that BLM needs to coordinate with other districts to achieve its goal. The Ely Field Office is conducting 14 projects on 760 acres that involve salt cedar, spotted knapweed, and tall white top (will physically remove from creek area).

Before 1997, the Ely Field Office did not have a strong weed program. This fiscal year (2000), \$91,000 has been allocated to help control weeds. One-third of this money goes towards salt cedar control.

The Las Vegas Field Office has been trying to control salt cedar in the area. Red Rock is free from salt cedar, but the BLM has been working on it for several years.

To help control weeds, equipment is needed, and additional funding is needed for restoration of water projects.

Selby asked what the projected cost per acre was for revegetation? DeForest said the only figures he has seen are revegetation for salt cedar, which was over \$2,000-\$3,000 per acre. The Las Vegas Field Office used a cooperators help in treatment. The Nevada Department of Forestry provided 40% of the labor for the rehabilitation work. Controlling weeds instead of preventing weeds raises the price considerably.

DeForest commented that some areas in Nevada are in position to prevent weeds now. He stated that two percent of the 270,000 acres of BLM land inventoried had weed problems. The first strategy is to not let areas of weeds develop; we need to inform the public to spot weeds. We need to educate children to help us become aware.

It was noted that BLM is trying to inform campers and hikers. One RAC member asked about weed-free feed? Agee noted that the agricultural community certainly does not want to spread weeds. The surrounding states have done a better job in implementing weed-free feed and weed awareness and control programs than Nevada. The Cooperative Extension Service can certify areas for being weed-free. Since horses won't eat most weeds, there should not be too much concern about weed-free feed for them, but cattle, sheep and goats are a major problem. Russian knapweed is the only weed that a horse will eat, and it is poisonous.

DeForest stated that several states have been successful in getting stricter regulations in place. He commented that Pahrangat Valley is totally infested with knapweed. Also the Kirch wildlife area is infested because of the purchase of contaminated seed.

Simpson said that Nevada has been successful in obtaining BLM funding for noxious weeds. BLM believes the problem is still salvageable in Nevada; whereas the battle is considered lost in many other states with BLM-administered lands.

The question was asked why cheatgrass wasn't on the noxious weed list. DeForest said that Charles Moses, Nevada Department of Agriculture, believes that they didn't add cheatgrass to the list because it would have created a big problem, as it would have led people to believe we had already lost the weed war. Cheatgrass can be controlled by competition, but it is only a temporary invader. Experience has shown other weeds worse than cheatgrass follow such as mudshead rye, rush skeleton weed or Scotch thistle.

The Ely Field Office initiated a process for assessing risks of weed infestation for projects in 1998, and in 1999, DeForest started weed identification tours on the outskirts of Ely where a majority of noxious weeds can be found. He has taken most resource specialists in the Ely office into the field to show them the weeds.

Agee commented that Bob Wilson, White Pine County Extension Agent, is a major promoter of the weed project. If you find a weed they cannot identify, they can take a picture and scan it, then email to Wilson to identify the weed.

Maichle asked the members if they could issue a standard stating land should be weed-free instead of tying to existing Standards and Guidelines? Guidelines should be controlling weeds; not livestock. Guidelines the RAC would come up with already exist (e.g., prevention, detection, etc.). The brochure on Las Vegas weeds has already incorporated these guidelines.

DeForest commented that the main reason for the spread of weeds is not animals. It is people

driving off roads who are unaware of the fact that they could be spreading noxious plants hundreds of miles.

The members discussed what conditions make lands susceptible to weeds. Current land-use plans have acceptability of late seral plants. The RAC members should first look at the existing guidelines before making more guidance. Their goal is to get to health of land. The Las Vegas Field Office appears to have sound guidelines.

Chairman Whiting stated that the RAC would like to hear from BLM on what they can do to help, as the best deterrent is to manage proactively. MacKinnon told the RAC he believes they are looking at the right guidelines. **Maichle was asked by the Chairman to work up a draft on standards and guidelines, using some of the pages from DeForest's presentation and the Las Vegas Field Office guidelines.**

## **FIELD MANAGERS UPDATE**

### **ELY FIELD OFFICE**

Eric Luse, Associate Field Manager, handed out a one-page sheet concerning the Desert Tortoise Plan. The Plan Amendment received 6 letters of protest. The Ely Field Office and the State Office have reviewed these concerns and sent the protests back to headquarters for review and action.

**Sage Grouse**—Many things are affecting sagebrush steppe communities. Sagebrush is dwindling in Nevada and is being replaced by other plant species. This will effect the listing of the sage grouse species. BLM Nevada is taking a pro-active approach by doing a sagebrush management plan, which will explain how we will manage in the next couple of years. The plan should be completed by the field offices in 2002. The plan will deal with sagebrush-related issues.

BLM is developing interim guidelines for sage grouse, and is taking a pro-active approach to work with permittees to help protect areas. The objective is to prevent listing of the sage grouse under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act.

Trends in Lincoln County for sage grouse have been down, except for the last four years; they have been stable. BLM is banding birds to get an accurate count. In the past, BLM concentrated on leks (breeding areas), but more observation of the bird is needed. The sage grouse efforts tie in well with the Great Basin Restoration Initiative.

Frank-Churchill stated that dust from mining covers plants and effects the movement of sage grouse.

Luse explained to the members about the Pinyon/Juniper (P/J) management project. Mature stands in Nevada are impeding sage brush communities. The BLM has talked about fire,

chemicals and chaining. The Ely Field Office is exploring a new tool—use of a feller-buncher, which is a type of mechanical scissors. Oregon and Colorado are using this method of thinning P/J. With this method, there are many options for the wood such as firewood and biomass. There is little community support for use of chemicals or fire on Mount Wilson. The Ely Field Office will provide more information later, but wanted to inform the RAC the options they are seeking for managing P/J.

It was suggested that opposition is from lack of informed people. If BLM had a demonstration area the public could look at, this would help reduce opposition. The Ely Field Office is indeed trying the project in another location that can become a demo area. A biomass project could be another tool for managing P/J.

Luse asked Deforest to provide an unscheduled presentation on *Ely's prescribed fire plan* (see attachments). A brief summary outlines the decision process (see flow chart). ***The RAC members will receive the plan when it is provided for public comment.***

Chairman Whiting commented that prior to this time, the RAC hasn't been involved in the prescribed fire issue. He is aware that there is a lot of effort going towards this initiative. Luse told the members that after BLM is further in the process, they will put together a comprehensive presentation for the RAC.

At 3:07 p.m., Chairman Whiting temporarily recessed the meeting for a break. The meeting was reconvened at 3:16 p.m.

#### **BATTLE MOUNTAIN FIELD OFFICE**

Craig MacKinnon, Tonopah Field Station Manager stated that BLM had received complaints that nine burros were coming into the Beatty residential area, so BLM received authorization to remove these burros. Unfortunately, they had slow horses against fast burros, so that plan didn't work. Fortunately, the burros spread out enough, they haven't come back into Beatty yards.

MacKinnon drew everyone's attention to several scheduled recreation events (see attachment). The Central Recreation Partnership will be hosting a dedication of a bike trail in Goldfield on June 10. BLM and Esmeralda County have been partners in the project.

Two Mars rovers will be deployed in Nevada near the Lunar Crater in June as part of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration project to explore Mars. The rover units will allow controllers in Houston to manipulate them as if the rovers were on Mars. BLM is still working on the land exchange with Barrick Corporation on the Rhyolite train depot. BLM hopes to complete the exchange in May. Barrick has been an outstanding partner on this and other issues in Rhyolite.

**Renewable Resource issues**--Amargoasa Toad working group has outlined some issues that they will present to the RAC at the May meeting in Beatty.

**Grazing**--Tonopah is conducting five evaluations this year, with Reveille being the biggest area.

**Timbisha homelands**--The Legislative EIS is nearing completion. The water issues are being resolved. The State Engineer determined that Scotty's Junction would be allocated 375 acre feet. Gaming will be an issue. Frank-Churchill pointed out to the RAC members that once again the Federal government was trying to dictate to Indian people their right to allow gaming.

#### **LAS VEGAS FIELD OFFICE**

Mark Morse, Las Vegas Field Manager, introduced Angie Lara as the office's new Associate Field Manager. Lara worked in the civil rights area in the New Mexico State Office in Santa Fe.

**Nellis Air Force Range Resource Plan** --Jeff Steinmetz, Planning and Environmental Coordinator for Las Vegas Field Office, stated that there is considerable concern about the planning process mandated by the recent withdrawal renewal legislation. He handed out a copy of a "Dear Interested Party" letter that identified the upcoming public scoping meetings for the EIS. BLM wants RAC members involved in the process.

*Maichle commented that BLM still needs to withdraw some lands by Cholepa Peaks (Stairstep).* He would like to see legislation on this exact action. The military has until 2001 to turn back this land to BLM. BLM would have to identify uses of the land. MacKinnon believes it is 33,000 acres, which is not included in the RMP.

**Chairman Whiting would like all RAC members to attend at least one scoping meeting, and for the RAC to be involved in the process. *He asked for an update at the May meeting.***

**New Las Vegas Field Office building**--Construction to begin soon with move in projected for late Fall. The FS will share the building with BLM.

**Red Rock Canyon General Management Plan**--The final plan will provide an alternative that addresses wild horse and burro and recreational concerns. BLM is taking bits and pieces of alternatives and coming up with something more acceptable to the public.



Morse stated that he slowed down the process of developing the final plan, because he just arrived as Las Vegas Field Manager and wanted to make sure he understood the whole issue before making a decision. ***Morse hopes to have a draft to the RAC members to review by the next meeting.***

Helton asked if an executive summary would be available for the RAC to review. Morse stated that one would be included.

Senator Reid has expressed interest in Sloan Canyon. Last year, Congress gave BLM \$50,000 to study Sloan Canyon. The Harry Reid Center at UNLV is conducting the study. The draft study will be available for review May 31.

**SNPLMA**--Exchanges are being conducted in addition to the proposed purchases of land under the SNPLMA, where BLM had signed exchange agreements in place when the Act passed. Morse wanted to encourage outgoing members to reapply for RAC nomination. Let BLM Nevada deal with the turnover idea that Washington would like to follow. If present members have time and interest to be on the RAC, please send in your application. Chairman Whiting thanked Morse for the good summary.

#### **SET NEXT MEETING DATES**

The next planned meeting is May 18 and 19 in Beatty. A tour of Rhyolite is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, followed by a meeting on Friday at the Beatty Community Center. Most members will meet at the Las Vegas Field Office on Thursday morning. They will leave at 8 a.m., and should arrive in Beatty about 10 a.m. to begin the tour. The tour will include Rhyolite and the Barrick mine which is under closure. At 3:30 p.m. in Beatty, the RAC will be briefed on the Timbisha homelands LEIS.

On Friday, the meeting will start at 8 a.m., at the Community Center. Items that will be discussed during the meeting will be:

- Red Rock Plan
- Nellis Plan
- Cultural Resource Update
- Rhyolite discussion
- Standards and Guidelines for Noxious Weeds
- Field District Updates
- SNPLMA Discussion
- Yomba Update

Chairman Whiting discovered that he has a major conflict with May 18 and 19. He has to attend the Society of Mining meeting in Elko. After some discussion, the RAC decided to go ahead and meet on

these dates since he will be able to attend the May 18 field trip. The RAC Vice-Chairman and past Chairman will conduct the meeting in Beatty on May 19.

The next RAC meeting, after the Beatty meeting, is tentatively scheduled for August 14 & 15, provided no major issues arise necessitating a meeting in June or July. Guerrero will contact other RAC members to check on dates. If these dates are not convenient, they will go back to August 10 and 11.

Chairman Whiting thanked everyone for their presentation and handouts. There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Whiting adjourned the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

DATE:

August 18, 2000

APPROVED:

/s/ Duane Whiting  
Chairman  
Mohave-Southern Great Basin  
Resource Advisory Council

Minutes provided by Debra Kolkman  
BLM, Nevada State Office of Communications

Attachments:

- 1 - Draft Meeting Minutes from January 21 RAC Meeting (10 pp)
- 2 - Draft Press Release - Nominations for Land Acquisition Under the SNPLMA (2 pp)
- 3 - Letter dated February 25, 2000, from Mojave-Southern RAC to SNPLMA Project Office (2 pp)
- 4 - SNPLMA Nomination - Lockes Ranch (1 p)
- 5 - Press Clips about Mt. Charleston Tour (2 pp)
- 6 - Ely Land Disposal Issues (4 pp)
- 7 - Yomba Shoshone Tribe (25 pp)
- 8 - New Release on Call for Nominations (6 pp)
- 9 - Weed Strategy and Management (14 pp)
- 10-Weed Brochure (not available)
- 11-Las Vegas Field Office Weed Prevention Schedule (4 pp)
- 12-Ely Field Office Update (8 pp)
- 13-Battle Mountain Field Office Update (5 pp)
- 14-Las Vegas Field Office Update (2 pp)
- 15-Ely Field Office Prescribed Fire Plan (4 pp)
- 16-News Article on Wild Horses (1 p)